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By *ADAM FITZ-ADAM.*

To be continued every THURSDAY.

THURSDAY, *December* the 19th, 1754.

I AM never better pleaſed than when I can vindicate the honour of my native country: at the ſame time, I would not endeavour to defend it prepoſterouſly, nor to contradict the eyes, the ſenſes of mankind, out of ſtark good patriotiſm. The fluctuating condition of the things of this world neceſſarily produces a change in manners and morals, as well as in the face of countries and cities. Climates cannot operate ſo powerfully on conſtitutions, as to preſerve the ſame character perpetually to the ſame nations. I do not doubt but in ſome age of the world the Bœotians will be a very lively whimſical people, and famous for their repartees; and that our neighbour iſlanders will be remarkable for the truth of their ideas, and for the preciſion with which they will deliver their conceptions. Some men are ſo bigotted

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to antiquated notions, that if they were, even in this age, to write a panegyric on old England, they would cram their compoſition with encomiums on our good-nature, our bravery, and our hoſpitality. This indeed might be a panegyric on OLD England, but would have very little reſemblance to the modern characteriſtics of the nation. Our good nature was neceſſarily ſowered by the ſpirit of party; our courage has been a little cramped by the act of parliament that reſtrained prize-fighting; and hoſpitality is totally impracticable, ſince a much more laudable cuſtom has been introduced, and prevailed univerſally, of paying the ſervants of other people much more than their maſter's dinner coſt. Yet we ſhall always have virtues ſufficient to countenance very exalted panegyrics: and if ſome of our more heroic qualities are grown obſolete, others of a gentler caſt, and better calculated for the happineſs of ſociety, have grown up and diffuſed themſelves in their room. While we were rough and bold, we could not be polite: while we feaſted half a dozen wapentakes with ſirloins of beef, and ſheep roaſted whole, we could not attend to the mechaniſm of a plate, no bigger than a crown-piece, *loaded* with the legs of canary birds, dreſſed *à la Pompadour*.

LET nobody ſtart at my calling this a polite nation. It ſhall be the buſineſs of this paper to prove that we are the moſt polite nation in Europe; and that France muſt yield to us in the extreme delicacy of our refinements. I might urge, as a glaring inſtance in which that nation has forfeited her title to politeneſs, the impertinent ſpirit of their parliaments, which though couched in very civilly-worded remonſtrances, is certainly at bottom very ill-bred. They have contradicted their monarch, and croſſed his clergy in a manner not to be defended by a people who pique themſelves upon complaiſance and attentions——But I abominate politics; and when I am writing in defence of politeneſs, ſhall certainly not blend ſo coarſe a ſubject with ſo civil a theme.

IT is not virtue that conſtitutes the politeneſs of a nation, but the art of reducing vice to a ſyſtem that does not ſhock ſociety. POLITENESS (as I underſtand the word) *is an univerſal deſire of pleaſing others (that are not too much below one) in trifles, for a little time; and of making one's intercourſe with them agreeable to both parties, by*

by civility without ceremony, by eaſe without brutality, by complaiſance without flattery, by acquieſcence without ſincerity. A clergyman who puts his patron into a ſweat by driving him round the room, till he has found the cooleſt place for him, is not polite. When Bubbamira changes her handkerchief before you, and wipes her neck, rather than leave you alone while ſhe ſhould perform the refreſhing office in next room; I ſhould think ſhe is not polite. When Boncœur ſhivers on your dreary hill, where for twenty years you have been vainly endeavouring to raiſe reluctant plantations, and yet profeſſes that only ſome of the trees have been a little kept back by the late dry ſeaſon; he is not polite; he is more; he is kind. When Sophia is really pleaſed with the ſtench of a kennel, becauſe her huſband likes that ſhe ſhould go and look at a favourite litter; ſhe muſt not pretend to politeneſs; ſhe is only a good wife. If this definition, and theſe inſtances are allowed me, it will be difficult to maintain that the nations who have had the moſt extenſive renown for politeneſs, had any pretenſions to it. The Greeks called all the reſt of the world barbarians: the Romans went ſtill farther, and treated them as ſuch. Alexander, the beſt-bred hero amongſt the former, I muſt own, was polite, and ſhowed great ATTENTIONS for Darius's family; but I queſtion, if he had not extended his ATTENTIONS a little farther to the princeſs Statira, whether he could be pronounced quite well-bred. For the Romans; ſo far from having any notion of treating foreigners with regard, there is not one claſſic author that mentions a ſingle ball or maſquerade given to any ſtranger of diſtinction. Nay, it was a common practice with them to tie kings, queens, and women of the firſt faſhion of other countries in couples, like hounds, and drag them along their *via Piccadillia* in triumph, for the entertainment of their ſhopkeepers and prentices. A practice that we ſhould look upon with horror! What would the Examiner have ſaid, if the duke of Marlborough had hauled marſhal Tallard to St. Pauls or the Royal Exchange behind his chariot? How deſervedly would the French have called us SAVAGES, if we had made marſhall Belleiſle pace along the kennel in Fleet-ſtreet, or up Holbourn, while ſome of our miniſters or generals called it an ovation?

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THE French, who attempt to ſucceed the Romans in empire, and who affect to have ſucceeded them in politeneſs, have adopted the ſame way of thinking, though ſo contrary to true good-breeding. They have no idea that an Engliſhman or a German ever ſees a ſuit of cloaths till he arrives at Paris. They wonder, if you talk of a coach at Vienna, or of a ſoupe at London; and are ſo confident of having monopolized all the arts of civilized life, that with the greateſt complaiſance in the world, they affirm to you, that they ſuppoſe your dukes and ducheſſes live in caves, with only the property of wider foreſts than ordinary, and that *les milords anglois*, with a great deal of money, live upon raw fleſh, and ride races without breeches or ſaddles. At their houſes, they receive you with wonder that ſhocks you, or with indifference that mortifies you; and if they put themſelves to the torture of converſing with you, after you have taken infinite pains to acquire their language, it is merely to inform you, that you neither know how to dreſs like a ſenſible man, nor to eat, drink, game, or divert yourſelf like a chriſtian. How different are our ATTENTIONS to foreigners! how open our houſes to their nobility, our purſes to their tradeſmen! But without drawing antitheſes between our politeneſs and their ill-breeding, I ſhall produce an inſtance in which we have puſhed our refinements *on the duties of ſociety*, beyond what the moſt civilized nations ever imagined. We are not only well-bred in common intercourſe, but our very crimes are tranſacted with ſuch a ſoftneſs of manners, that though they may *injure*, they are ſure never to *affront* our neighbour. The inſtance I mean, is, the extreme good-breeding which has been introduced into the ſcience of robbery, which (conſidering how very frequent it is become) would really grow a nuſance to ſociety, if the profeſſors of it had not taken all imaginable precautions to make it as civil a commerce, as gaming, conveyancing, toad-eating, pimping, or any of the money-inveigling arts, which had already got an eſtabliſhed footing in the world. A highwayman would be reckoned a BRUTE, a MONSTER, if he had not all manner of attention not *to frighten the ladies*; and none of the great Mr. Naſh's laws are more ſacred, than that of reſtoring any favourite bawble to which a robbed lady has a particular partiality. Now turn your eyes to France. No people upon earth have leſs of the *ſcavoir vivre* than their banditti. No Tartar has leſs *douceur* in his manner than

than a French highwayman. They take your money without making you a bow, and your life without making you an apology. This obliges their government to keep up a numerous guêt, a ſevere police, racks, gibbets, and twenty troubleſome things, which might all be avoided, if they would only reckon and breed up their theives to be *good company*. I know that ſome of our lateſt imported young gentlemen affirm that the ſieur Mandrieu, the terror of the eaſtern provinces, learned to dance of Marſeille himſelf, and has frequently ſupped with the incomparable Jelliot. But till I hear whether *he dies like a gentleman*, I ſhall forbear to rank him with the *petit maitres* of our own Tyburn. How extreme is the politeſſe of the latter! Mrs. Chenevix has not more inſinuation when ſhe ſells a ſnuff-box of *papier machè*, or a bergamot toothpickcaſe, than a highwayman when he begs to know if you have no rings nor bank-bills.

An acquaintance of mine was robbed a few years ago, and very near ſhot through the head by the going off of the piſtol of the accompliſhed Mr. Mc LEAN; yet the whole affair was conducted with the greateſt good-breeding on both ſides. The robber, who had only taken a purſe *this way*, becauſe he had that morning been diſappointed of marrying a great fortune, no ſooner returned to his lodgings, than he ſent the gentleman two letters of excuſes, which, with leſs wit than the epiſtles of Voiture, had ten times more natural and eaſy politeneſs in the turn of their expreſſion. In the poſtſcript, he appointed a meeting at Tyburn at twelve at night, where the gentleman might *purchaſe again* any trifles he had loſt; and my friend has been blamed for not accepting the rendevous, as it ſeemed liable to be conſtrued by ill-natured people into a doubt of the *honour* of a man, who had given him all the ſatisfaction in his power, for having *unluckily* been near ſhooting him through the head.

The Lacedæmonians were the only people, except the Engliſh, who ſeem to have put robbery on a right foot; and I have often wondered how a nation that had delicacy enough to underſtand robbing on the highway, ſhould at the ſame time have been ſo barbarous, as to eſteem poverty, blackbroth, and virtue! We had no highwaymen, that were men of faſhion, till we had exploded plumb-porridge.

But